



THE BIRD THAT LIVES

Rav Moshe Wolman of Shaarei Torah of Monsey (in his incredible weekly *parashah shiur* last year) shared an incredible idea from Rav Shimshon Pincus (*Nefesh Shimshon, Parashas Bereishis*):

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 108) tells us a fascinating incident that took place in the *Teivah* itself. Noach noticed that a certain bird, the “chol” bird, was sitting quietly, and Noach asked her, “Don’t you want to eat? Why aren’t you asking for food?” The bird responded, “I saw how busy you were, and I did not want to bother you.” Noach was so amazed by her response that he gave her a *berachah* that she should live forever!

Asks Rav Pincus: The Midrash in *Yalkut Shimoni* tells us that Chava fed the animals and birds some of the fruit from the *Eitz HaDaas*, but there was one bird that did not eat from it — the “chol” bird; and thus, this bird never died.

The obvious question is, why did this bird need a blessing from Noach, since it had not eaten fruit from the *Eitz HaDaas*, and thus it already could not possibly die!

Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin answered beautifully: The fact that the bird didn’t eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* meant that she would not die naturally, but she was not protected from another form of death, such as being killed by a hunter or the like. But now that Noach had given her a blessing of life, she would always be protected from all forms of death.

Rav Pincus brings proof to this answer from the fact that Kayin and Hevel did not partake of the *Eitz HaDaas* at all. If so, how was it possible that Hevel could be killed? The answer is as we said above: They were spared from natural death, but from death in unnatural ways they were not spared.

Rav Pincus then takes this entire idea and provides a new answer and another dimension: Not eating from the *Eitz HaDaas* meant that a person had no reason to die, but that does not mean that he had a reason to live....

After all, there was another tree in that Garden of Eden—the Tree of Life, and that is because not dying is only one side of the equation; there must also be something that brings life as well.

He goes on to explain that this is why on Rosh Hashanah there are two different *sefarim*: one the Book of Chaim, and the other the Book of Meisim. If a person is, *Be’Ezras Hashem*, not written in the Book of Meisim, isn’t that enough for him to merit life? Not at all; he must first avoid being written in the Book of Meisim, and instead to be written in the Book of Chaim. Life is a gift in itself that is granted to each person on Rosh Hashanah, and that is the gift for which each Yid begs Hashem Yisbarach.

That special bird did not eat from the *Eitz HaDaas*, and thus she had no reason to die; but only after she was blessed with life by Noach did she have a reason to live.

The *vort* itself is very deep and very powerful and surely needs elaboration, but what I learn from it is the following: Many people walk around the world, living and breathing; but in a certain sense, although they are not dead, *Baruch Hashem*, they are not really alive either — as their lives are empty and meaningless. And then we have the others who are, *Baruch Hashem*, not just “not dead,” *but they are truly alive*; they have been blessed with the blessing of true life — a life of *avodas Hashem*, a life of joy and meaning. *They are truly living*.

The incredible incident of the “chol” bird can serve as an illustration for us of what life really is: One might merit, *Baruch Hashem*, not to eat from the fruit of the tree of death... but he must also taste the fruit of the tree of life to merit the life that is truly worth living.... *B’Siyata DiShmaya*.